

Public Library Services to Ethnocultural Minorities in Australia: A State-of-the-Art Survey

RADHA RASMUSSEN
IVAN KOLARIK

The major task confronting all Australians is not to decide whether Australia is a multicultural society. We *have* a multicultural society. The first challenge is to make it work.¹

THE HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN people has been mainly one of immigration. World War II provided an impetus for massive migration to Australia by peoples of almost all parts of the world, although once the wave of immigrants displaced by the war had subsided, the preferred countries of migrant intake were Britain and countries in northern Europe.² In 1973, a policy of nondiscrimination in the selection of migrants was introduced, making the Australian society one composed of diverse ethnocultural minorities.³ Currently, more than 20 percent of the Australian population of 14.5 million were born overseas, and as of 1976 almost 1.5 million of these had been born in non-English-speaking countries (see table 1).

Although this diversity of nationalities has always made a significant contribution to the economic, scientific and cultural growth of Australia, it was not until the 1970s that this contribution was fully recognized, and the long-held policy of assimilation into the host society was replaced by a policy of integration. More recently, "the growing assertiveness on the part of the ethnic communities for better access to their share of the national cake"⁴ has contributed to a further change in policy from integration to multiculturalism, when the federal

Radha Rasmussen is a Lecturer, Graduate School of Librarianship, Monash University, Victoria, Australia; and Ivan Kolarik is Assistant Director, Migrant Settlement Services, Victorian Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Australia.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION IN AUSTRALIAN STATES AND TERRITORIES OF PEOPLE BORN IN NON-ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRIES

| Country of Birth | Australian Capital Territory | New South Wales | Northern Territory | State or Territory of Residence | | | Victoria | Western Australia |
|------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------|----------|-------------------|
| | | | | Queensland | South Australia | Tasmania | | |
| Austria | 779 | 8,957 | 178 | 1,548 | 2,204 | 410 | 7,772 | 1,412 |
| Germany | 2,785 | 34,059 | 849 | 10,897 | 15,393 | 1,886 | 34,261 | 7,431 |
| Netherlands | 1,804 | 24,031 | 554 | 10,683 | 10,741 | 2,916 | 30,752 | 10,631 |
| Czechoslovakia | 373 | 6,423 | 149 | 1,201 | 1,440 | 330 | 4,733 | 853 |
| Hungary | 563 | 11,931 | 119 | 1,629 | 2,679 | 354 | 8,858 | 1,111 |
| Poland | 827 | 16,543 | 103 | 3,542 | 6,914 | 1,372 | 22,363 | 4,387 |
| USSR | 187 | 6,269 | 22 | 1,704 | 1,273 | 121 | 4,221 | 735 |
| Yugoslavia | 3,383 | 57,422 | 404 | 5,387 | 9,003 | 886 | 56,702 | 10,407 |
| Greece | 1,544 | 50,002 | 1,258 | 3,941 | 14,706 | 854 | 76,143 | 4,461 |
| Italy | 2,697 | 73,397 | 790 | 18,875 | 31,942 | 1,423 | 116,712 | 29,317 |
| Malta | 440 | 22,982 | 54 | 2,204 | 2,155 | 68 | 27,062 | 955 |
| Cyprus | 151 | 8,158 | 208 | 1,032 | 1,651 | 35 | 9,134 | 959 |
| Turkey/Lebanon | 126 | 34,647 | 35 | 690 | 1,300 | 40 | 15,038 | 633 |
| Egypt | 168 | 15,132 | 51 | 701 | 1,074 | 58 | 11,727 | 1,214 |
| Other Europe | 3,850 | 48,391 | 1,161 | 13,349 | 12,931 | 1,621 | 32,912 | 10,207 |
| Other Asia | 3,694 | 62,754 | 1,972 | 14,097 | 7,953 | 1,660 | 46,380 | 27,707 |
| Other America | 501 | 21,797 | 211 | 1,889 | 1,157 | 196 | 7,343 | 1,639 |
| Other Africa | 651 | 13,650 | 284 | 3,708 | 2,267 | 675 | 12,810 | 6,343 |
| Other Oceania | 729 | 10,655 | 389 | 8,213 | 1,000 | 471 | 3,489 | 1,083 |
| Total | 25,255 | 532,200 | 8,791 | 105,290 | 127,783 | 15,376 | 528,721 | 121,485 |

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1976 Census of Population and Housing.

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government in 1978 accepted the recommendations of the Galbally report in toto.⁵ This decision involves an allocation of 53 million Australian dollars for the period from 1978-79 to 1980-81 to promote the concept of multiculturalism. The official recognition that Australia is a multicultural society has serious implications for the Australian community, including librarians.

This paper concentrates on library and information services to the adult population from non-English-speaking countries and to the aboriginal population of Australia. The former will be referred to as ethnocultural minorities or ethnic communities, and the blanket term for their languages will be *community languages*. Although the aboriginal population can be regarded as an ethnic community, in this paper it is necessary to discuss library services to aborigines separately. It is recognized that it is these segments of the population, the ethnic communities and the aborigines, who are the most disadvantaged and provide the greatest challenge to implementing an appropriate library service.

PUBLIC LIBRARY SERVICES

In order to understand public library services to ethnocultural minorities in Australia it is necessary to have a brief background of the state and public library system in Australia. Australia is a federation of seven states and the Australian Capital Territory. Whereas the federal government is responsible for the National Library and public library service in the Australian Capital Territory, in all other states library services are the responsibility of the state and local governments. With the exception of the Northern Territory, all states in Australia have a state library which, among other functions, provides reference, interlibrary loan, and in some cases direct lending services to the public. The state libraries are administratively responsible to a library board or council, and the state librarian is the chief executive of that body. These governing bodies are responsible for the state library as well as for the planning and development of public library services in each state. In some instances this responsibility lies with the state library; in other instances, the library board has a specific division responsible for this task. Whatever the pattern, the state librarian is responsible for both state and public library development. Public library services fall within the jurisdiction of local government authorities and are maintained by local rates (i.e., property taxes), but they are heavily dependent on the state subsidies channeled to them through the library boards.

Prior to the 1970s, although most state and some public libraries had non-English-language collections, the languages represented were mainly the "traditional" European languages, such as French and German. The pre-1970 published literature on library services to ethnocultural minorities in Australia was negligible⁶ but parallel with changes in government policy, the following decade witnessed an unprecedented growth in literature drawing attention to the deficiencies of library services to ethnocultural minorities in Australia.⁷ It was also during this period that the minorities themselves made recommendations to various bodies on improving library services.⁸

General findings of the post-1970 publications are that:

1. Public libraries were not serving those unable to read English, and had not taken cognizance of the changing nature of Australian society and the concomitant need for public librarians to change their attitudes on the provision of library service.
2. The extent to which people made use of public libraries depended on level of education, e.g., the higher the educational level attained, the greater the use of public libraries. There was also a correlation between level of education and socioeconomic status.
3. Those people from countries with a strong tradition of public libraries made greater use of library services than those from countries lacking an effective library system.

Among the ethnocultural minorities in Australia, these findings generally apply to those who have migrated from non-English-speaking countries, particularly in southern Europe, South America, the Middle East, and to refugees from Southeast Asia.⁹ Without exception, these countries lack a strong tradition of public library service.

Library Provision

All state libraries have reference collections in community languages and provide a support service by maintaining centralized collections for bulk loan to public libraries in their respective states. The size of the collections varies among states. There are approximately 25,000 volumes in South Australia, 17,000 in New South Wales, 18,000 in Western Australia, 11,000 in Tasmania and Queensland, 3000 in Victoria, and the "provision of a very limited number of paperbacks" in the Northern Territory.¹⁰

With the exception of New South Wales and Victoria, the development of public library services to ethnic communities in the states is embryonic and generally dependent on the centralized collections held by state libraries. The public libraries in the cities, particularly Sydney

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and Melbourne with their high concentrations of ethnic communities, have the largest book collections in community languages. The estimated total book collections in community languages held by public libraries in Sydney and Melbourne were 45,318 (as of 1978) and 111,526 (as of 1978-79) volumes, respectively.¹¹ The latter figure includes the 13,333 books (as of June 1979) purchased under the Westfund project, a nonrecurrent federal grant of A\$ 94,000 allocated to the Library Council of Victoria in 1974 for the purchase of library materials in community languages for six public library systems in the Western Region of Melbourne.¹² The general standard of book provision for the entire Victorian population is 1.5 books per person. The question that arises is what the general standard of book provision in community languages should be. In 1974 a working party recommended that the standard of book provision for the ethnic communities in Victoria should be one book per person.¹³ This prescribed standard has not even been achieved for Melbourne, where the average standard for the ethnic communities in Victoria is one book for every four or five people (or 0.22 book per person). This figure generally holds true for books in Dutch, German, Greek, and Italian; books in Yugoslav, Polish and Maltese, for example, are underrepresented and average one book for every twelve people in Yugoslav and Polish, and one book for every twenty-four people in Maltese.¹⁴ If book provision seems inadequate in Melbourne, the situation in all other cities is even grimmer.

All states recognize the need to improve book provision but are hampered by inadequate funding. Nevertheless, some progress has been made in several states. As a result of two major reports, in 1975 and 1978, South Australia has had additional funding for book provision in community languages in 1976, and in 1979 ten libraries were established in the Western Region of Adelaide, an area with a comparatively high percentage of ethnic communities.¹⁵ The State Library of Western Australia has provision for a central "ethnic" lending library in its proposed library services building,¹⁶ and the Darwin District Library, to be opened shortly, will hold a number of books in community languages.¹⁷

In the past little concern has been shown for the provision of the more popular types of reading material, such as newspapers and magazines. In Melbourne and Sydney, public libraries are becoming more aware of the need for these materials, and in 1978 Melbourne's public libraries subscribed to about 230 newspapers and magazines in community languages.¹⁸ Some libraries in Melbourne have given preference to subscribing to magazines and periodicals rather than buying books in community languages; some examples are the Moorabbin (twenty-eight

titles), Keilor (ten titles) and Preston (eighteen titles) public libraries.¹⁹ Besides having a reasonably large book collection of 7857 volumes in community languages, Sunshine Public Library also subscribes to 34 periodicals and magazines,²⁰ which is more than the number subscribed to by either the State Library of South Australia (26 titles) or the State Library of Tasmania (27 titles).²¹

The lack of comprehensive collections of suitable graded English texts for those acquiring English as a second language has been noted by Thomas.²² Provision of this kind of material is as important as that of materials in community languages, as it equips ethnic communities with necessary skills to cope with the dominant language used in Australia. It also appears that many ethnic communities listen to the English classes broadcast on radio, despite the inconvenient, early morning time slot.²³ Wollongong City Library, New South Wales, has worked closely with Migrant Education Television, which produces the program "You Say the Word" and has distributed copies of the program to language classes and various groups.²⁴

Book provision continues to dominate that of audiovisual materials, although these media are very popular with a high proportion of ethnic communities, as evidenced by the heavy use of ethnic radio stations in some states and the revival of ethnic television.²⁵ Some public libraries, notably in Sydney, Wollongong and Melbourne, have recognized the importance of nonprint media to ethnic communities, but the fact remains that the number and range of audiovisual materials held by public libraries is limited, and there has been a call that consideration be given to a major switch of library resources from print to nonprint media.²⁶

To alleviate some of the problems of selection and acquisition of book and nonbook material in community languages, various methods have been employed: enlisting the aid of bilingual people living in Australia or abroad; placing blanket orders or exchanges; sending a staff member on a book-buying trip or using the services of a reliable contact to buy books when on holiday abroad; or purchasing books directly from the Swedish Library Bureau. All these schemes must be seen as temporary because, although workable, some are expensive, sporadic in nature and do not ensure a balanced collection of library materials for ethnic communities living in Australia.²⁷ Close liaison and consultation with ethnic communities is necessary to attain the goal of a balanced collection.

In Victoria although some public libraries use the centralized cataloging services of Technilib, which is a central cataloging and processing bureau for a number of public libraries in Victoria, on the whole

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there appears to be unnecessary duplication of efforts, as most individual libraries have responsibility for the selection, acquisition and cataloging of materials in community languages. In New South Wales, Wollongong City Library has recently organized a cooperative acquisition program with a group of some ten libraries, and attractive discounts were obtained.²⁸ The State Library of New South Wales established in late 1978 a Foreign Language Cataloguing Unit to cover six community languages.²⁹ In South Australia the Public Libraries Branch undertakes to purchase all library materials, including those in community languages for public libraries, thus offering considerable monetary savings due to bulk orders.³⁰

Library-Based Activities

A number of individual libraries, again, notably those in New South Wales and Victoria, have made an impact on their ethnic communities through activities such as organizing exhibitions reflecting the culture and heritage of different ethnic communities, getting members of an ethnic community to give cooking classes, and holding sewing classes or English classes, particularly for the women. The so-called Ethnic Events have been popular and the most-cited success story is that of Wollongong City Library's "Greek Night," where more than 2000 people attended the cultural evening (many others had to be turned away) and loans from the library "skyrocketed."³¹ Unfortunately, these library-based activities, which are important public relations programs, are sporadic and depend much on voluntary initiative and enthusiasm.

Community Information Services

Ethnic radio, and to a lesser extent ethnic press, have always performed an important role of community information service. Once a particular ethnic community is established as a cohesive group, that ethnic community often provides an information service to its members. However, the smaller ethnic communities, which may not be represented on ethnic radio and which lack the resources to publish their own newspapers, are indeed at a disadvantage. Other sources of information have generally been families and friends, but it has been stated that while contacts with "family, friends and ethnic communities have a central role in satisfying information needs, this information is often inaccurate, and therefore there is a critical need to improve the quality of

information held within communities."³² Many ethnic communities are not aware of the role of the library as an information center, which is not surprising, as many library-based information services in Australia are still experimental and not yet visible to the community. In addition, many libraries lack the staff with necessary linguistic skills to handle this service. Some libraries have moved into this new area of community information, e.g., Footscray Public Library's Community Directory, which is in English but includes supplements updating *Migrant's Melbourne* in four community languages.³³ Others, like Marrickville Public Library, Sydney, and Wollongong City Library, New South Wales, have launched successful bookmobile services with bilingual staff to shopping areas in localities with large numbers of one ethnic group.³⁴ In Melbourne, the shop-front Yarraville Branch of Footscray Public Library is located on a busy street where many Greeks do their shopping. This branch with its Greek staff member serves as a vital information center for the Greek population. In South Australia, the state library is currently experimenting with a relatively new service by having a Chinese-speaking librarian in attendance for a fixed period of time each week.³⁵

Libraries of Ethnic Communities

Dissatisfaction with the services provided by public libraries combined with a strong desire by ethnic communities to preserve their cultural heritage has resulted in the establishment of library collections within ethnic organizations. These collections are often referred to as libraries. While it is true that such libraries have been predominantly established by ethnic groups familiar with the role of libraries in their countries of origin, the current trend indicates that people from countries without a library tradition, e.g., the Turkish and Maltese communities, also wish to establish a repository of literature in their own language.

A survey conducted in 1977 by the State Library of Victoria revealed that twenty-three ethnic organizations in Victoria maintained libraries.³⁶ Although no official survey has been conducted since 1977, the Victorian Ministry of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs has provided financial assistance toward the establishment or development of library collections to at least twelve ethnic organizations not included in the 1977 survey. Such factors as the level of service provided by the public library and its ability to serve its ethnic community are considered before a grant is allocated by the ministry.

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It is generally acknowledged that due to their accessibility, informal environment and, above all, careful selection of materials, ethnic community libraries perform a valuable service for their communities. In fact, in Queensland ethnic communities have shown a lack of interest in the state library's bulk loan service as they claim that "their own libraries are adequate."³⁷ With the lack of an efficient centralized collection of materials in community languages, and the fact that public libraries often find it uneconomical to cater to the needs of smaller groups, the value of libraries maintained by such groups cannot be overemphasized.

It is clear that both public and ethnic community libraries would benefit from cooperation, and some initiatives have been noted in this area. Librarians in several country towns in Victoria have indicated willingness to acquire library materials on behalf of organizations of ethnic communities, and to give a short "library technician"-type course to people in charge of ethnic community libraries.³⁸ A project involving the deposit of a sizable collection of materials in community languages to improve the existing library collection held by St. Albans Multicultural Community Centre is being considered by the Keilor City Library, Melbourne.

Although ethnic community libraries perform an important role, the establishment of such libraries arouses professional concern that there may be unnecessary duplication of library and human resources. The provision of short training courses to members of the ethnic community responsible for its library also raises questions about professional standards and education for librarianship. Establishing separate ethnic community libraries could also discourage members of ethnic communities from being exposed to the richer and more comprehensive collections held by public libraries. This area merits serious investigation.

Service to Aborigines

In contrast with the progress made in serving the needs of ethnic communities, library and information services to the aboriginal population (see table 2) remain largely unexplored. While the 1970s witnessed an unprecedented growth in the literature on services to ethnic communities, a literature search on public library services to aborigines yielded only a few items.³⁹ The publications generally expressed concern about the lack of services to aborigines, and official recommendations advocating the need for developing this area were made at least in

South Australia.⁴⁰ The findings of the Horton report also confirmed the failure of libraries to serve the aboriginal community.⁴¹ More recently, a pilot study of library services to aborigines in Melbourne revealed that none of the surveyed public libraries made special attempts or had any plans to provide their aboriginal residents with a library service appropriate to their needs.⁴²

TABLE 2
DISTRIBUTION OF ABORIGINES IN AUSTRALIAN STATES AND TERRITORIES

| <i>State or Territory</i> | <i>Aborigine Population</i> |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Victoria | 14,760 |
| New South Wales | 40,450 |
| Queensland | 41,345 |
| South Australia | 10,714 |
| Western Australia | 26,126 |
| Tasmania | 2,942 |
| Northern Territory | 23,751 |
| Australian Capital Territory | 827 |
| Total | 160,915 |

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *1976 Census of Population and Housing*.

With few exceptions, state and public libraries provide only minimal service to their aboriginal populations.⁴³ Some states have plans to improve their services to aborigines. The State Library of Queensland has applied for federal funding to operate three public library outlets and to employ an aboriginal services librarian.⁴⁴ In Victoria, the employment of an aborigine was considered essential for the success of the Aboriginal Outreach Project initiated by the Swan Hill Regional Library. One of the principal aims of the project was to reach the aboriginal communities in order to identify their needs and thus enable the library to plan a service which could reflect those needs. An aboriginal field worker, whose salary was initially subsidized by a grant from the Library Council of Victoria and later by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, was employed by the library. As a result of the collective effort of those involved in the project, there has been increased library usage by aborigines, and the aboriginal field worker is now a permanent member of the library staff.⁴⁵

Apart from employing aborigines in libraries, the importance of giving library training to aborigines has also been recognized. For example, in 1974 the State Library of Queensland, in cooperation with

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the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Island Affairs, initiated a six-week library training program for three aboriginal girls.⁴⁶ The Crawford report has recommended that the South Australian "Library Department considers sponsorship of aboriginal library officers to undertake appropriate courses in librarianship."⁴⁷

As far as can be ascertained, the Swan Hill project is probably the most promising library development for the aborigines in Australia. There are plans to improve services to the aborigines; a few projects have been undertaken and a few individual librarians have expressed concern about the lack of library services to aborigines, but what is lacking is an understanding of the library and information needs of aborigines and continuity of service. In the main, the attitude of librarians toward services to aborigines has been one of indifference and should not pass unchallenged. One suspects that even if there was a concern, librarians would not know how to go about providing a service appropriate to the needs of aborigines.

Just how different the library and information needs of the aborigines are compared with those of other ethnic communities is unknown. In the absence of such knowledge one can only surmise that the needs of aborigines will be different. As P.A. Thomas has poignantly stated: "the aborigines have largely lost their lands, their way of life, their traditions; very soon their culture may survive only in records in libraries and museums. The opposing migrant groups, on the other hand, have a strong and permanent resource for their culture in their homelands."⁴⁸

Conclusion

Underlying most problems of providing library and information services are inadequate funding (which will be discussed later) and lack of knowledge of the information needs of ethnic communities. The recent federal survey on information needs of ethnic communities identified the following topics as the most frequent areas of information need: health, employment, finance, education, job training, immigration, and matters pertaining to everyday life, e.g., accommodation or where to purchase daily necessities cheaply.⁴⁹ These are the current dominant information needs of some ethnic communities, and the giving of such information is only one aspect of the library's role. The public library also provides library materials for education, recreation and culture, and there will always be some members of the ethnic communities who will use these materials. Thus, librarians must be acutely conscious of the specific needs of their ethnic communities and, in particular, the needs of the individual.

It has also been especially difficult to establish which new ethnic communities have moved into the library authority area, since the population census is undertaken once every five years, resulting in data of limited value to librarians. Where ethnic communities have been identified and special provision made for them, the mobility of ethnic communities resulting in internal migration has produced counter-problems, and has made the expenditures hard to justify to the library authority. In areas where there are migrant hostels, this problem is particularly acute. Hence, a centralized service needs to be established to alleviate some of these problems. With these underlying problems cited, discussion can now turn to the more specific problems encountered by librarians.

There are certain prerequisites for the continued improvement of library services to ethnic communities and to the aborigines. The lack of adequate funding has already been mentioned. In 1976 the Horton report recommended that federal funds be injected into the public library system, but so far this recommendation has not been realized.⁵⁰ Yet, in 1978, when the Galbally report recommended that eighteen "migrant resource centres" be established in local authorities over a three-year period, funds were granted by the federal government.⁵¹ Ironically, with the exception of welfare counseling, all the functions envisioned by the Galbally report have been undertaken by some public libraries.⁵² Existing public library service points were not considered as suitable sites for the resource centers.

While some public libraries may have made an impact at the local level, in general, public library services to ethnic communities have not made sufficient impact at the state or federal level. Services to aborigines are negligible even at the local level. There needs to be a planned coordination of services, as individual sporadic activities have failed to achieve recognition. With the exception of Queensland, all states maintain that their centralized collections of materials in community languages are well used and that, given additional funds, comprehensive collections can be built. While most public libraries also maintain collections to serve their users, the importance of having a comprehensive centralized collection should be recognized and encouraged.

The need for bilingual and bicultural staff has also been referred to earlier, and the recent Scott survey has reemphasized the importance of face-to-face contact with people with relevant linguistic skills.⁵³ Unfortunately, the few bilingual and bicultural librarians who are available are scattered throughout each state, and ideally, each state should try to get optimum use of their resources by using these people as state

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specialists. A few libraries in New South Wales and Victoria have appointed an ethnic "services" or "resources" librarian, and where such appointments have been made, there has been considerable increase in library use by ethnic communities. The need for specialized training for librarians to work with ethnic groups has been called for in the Horton report, and although in 1979 the Graduate School of Librarianship and the Centre for Migrant Studies, both of Monash University, offered to mount such a course, there has been no response.⁵⁴

Library services to ethnic communities have been a source of concern of many, but nobody's major responsibility, and in this respect the Library Association of Australia has failed to give direction or exercise the necessary leadership. Apart from commissioning the survey undertaken by Thurles Thomas in 1973,⁵⁵ the association has not even taken a stand on the role of libraries in Australia's multicultural society. In the absence of such leadership, a working group on Multicultural Library Services (MCLS) was formed in Victoria in July 1979. A similar interest group has been established in South Australia. The MCLS has not sought affiliation with the Library Association of Australia as yet, but under the aegis of the Victorian Branch of the Library Association of Australia, is organizing a national conference in early November 1980 entitled "Multiculturalism and Libraries." The MCLS has also made contact with the Victorian Aboriginal Education Consultative Group, which as a result has now established a library subcommittee, and there are plans to undertake a survey on the library and information needs of aborigines in Victoria. The subcommittee is currently exploring sources for funding the survey, and should funds become available, the survey will be a major contribution to library services to aborigines—the most neglected area of library service in Australia.

Any discussion on library services to ethnic communities and aborigines should take into consideration the attitudes of the Anglo-Saxon host society toward these groups. There are some who still uphold the policy of assimilation and others who can be considered bigots.⁵⁶ Discrimination, particularly against the aborigines, exists.⁵⁷ It would be naïve to assume that all librarians and decision-makers in local authorities are exempt from these attitudes. Thus, considerable change in attitude toward ethnic communities and aborigines must be an essential prerequisite for a successful library service.

The provision of library services to ethnic communities and aborigines is only a first step toward implementing a multicultural policy. A multilingual society does not necessarily produce a multicultural society, and the concept of multiculturalism has far more serious implications than just the provision of services to ethnic communities and

aborigines. To implement a multicultural library service, the host society must be made aware of the cultural differences existing in Australian society. Multiculturalism as a concept makes demands of the host society; it requires it "to promote or even to encourage some degree of cultural and social variations within an overall context of national unity."⁵⁸ The task is not easy, and many challenges are posed for the 1980s. While the 1970s may have witnessed an unprecedented growth in library service to ethnic communities and a glimmer of hope for aborigines, it will be difficult to sustain the standard of service so far achieved for the ethnic communities. With financial restraints and with new appointments frozen, the 1980s could well witness a decline in library services, including services to ethnic communities. The service has already begun to limp and will continue to do so unless federal funds are forthcoming. Librarians must rationalize their library systems, coordinate their services to ethnic communities and create an awareness within the host society that Australia is a multicultural society. We have barely entered the first phase of introducing a multicultural library service, but we should be seriously thinking of the wider implications of multiculturalism, which requires a reappraisal of library services to aborigines and adds a new dimension to library services, that of educating the host society. The onus to do so is on all public libraries and not just those library authorities serving a large concentration of ethnic communities and/or aborigines.

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